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Tower Commission Feared Analysis Was Compromised

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 — The Tower Commission was concerned that the Central Intelligence Agency allowed some of its intelligence analysis to be influenced by the National Security Council's goals and was critical of William J. Casey, the former Director of Central Intelligence, for failing to take over the Iran arms dealings from the White House, a commission member said today.

The commission member, Brent Scowcroft, a former national security adviser to President Ford, said the commission had found that only a "handful of selected individuals" in the C.I.A. were involved in the Iran-contra affair, rather than the agency as a whole.

In an interview, Mr. Scowcroft said the most troublesome finding about the C.I.A.'s role was that "we saw signs of intelligence which included policy recommendations."

Was the C.I.A. affected by N.S.C. goals?

Mr. Scowcroft was referring to a revised Special National Intelligence Estimate on Iran in May 1985 that agency analysts provided after pressure from members of the National Security Council who wanted a basis for opening talks with Teheran. The revised estimate superseded a 1984 report that found little support for American influence in Iran.

"There was close coordination between the N.S.C. and the writing of the revised estimate and we saw that as a special caution," Mr. Scowcroft said. "You don't want cooked intelligence."

The head of the C.I.A.'s analysis directorate at the time was Robert M. Gates, whose confirmation to succeed Mr. Casey as director has been held up in the Senate by questions about his role in the affair.

The commission named several C.I.A. officials who helped Marine Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North carry out the arms shipments to Iran and cooperated with him in supplying weapons to the rebels in Nicaragua. They included Clair George, the head of the agency's directorate of operations; Charles Allen, who was Colonel North's liaison with the intelligence community, and George Cave, a retired C.I.A. specialist on Iran who served as a translator and then held a number of meetings with Colonel North and his Iranian contacts.

They became active after a secret finding by President Reagan in January 1986 authorized the arms deals with Iran. The commission said that Mr. Casey, who supported the Iran initiative, should have taken over the operation, explained the risks to President Reagan and notified Congress as legally required.

In particular, the commission faulted Mr. Casey for not checking the background of Manucher Ghorbanifar, the Iranian arms dealer on whom the N.S.C. relied, despite C.I.A.' doubts about his honesty as early as 1980 and his failure on a polygraph test.

The Tower Commission also reported that a C.I.A. field officer in Central America, whom it did not name but who has been identified by Congressional investigators as Thomas Castillo, the station chief in Costa Rica, was given a coding machine by Colonel North to help in arranging weapons deliveries to the contras.

After Mr. Castillo received one shipment in April 1986, he asked Colonel North, "When and where do you want this stuff? We are prepared to deliver as soon as you call for it."

Although the commission did not indict the C.I.A. as an institution, one intelligence official said many in the C.I.A. were reading the report today with shock and dismay as they learned about involvement of some colleagues.

The commission's focus on individuals in the C.I.A. was echoed today by Senator Frank H. Murkowski, Republican of Alaska, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "It isn't that the system didn't work," he said of the C.I.A. "It was really the human factor that got us into this thing."

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